

ARCTIC OPENING: INSECURITY AND OPPORTUNITY. Christian Le Mière and Jeffrey Mazo. 2013. London: Oxford (The International Institute for Strategic Studies): Routledge. 179 p., illustrated, softcover. ISBN 978-1-138-77669-2. £10.

'The very thing that makes the Arctic a linchpin and bellwether of global environmental and geopolitical change is that the region's physical environment is far from stable, and that the changes in that environment will not be steady or linear' (page 168). This is undoubtedly a true concluding statement by the authors Christian Le Mière and Jeffrey Mazo who in this short 170-page treatise on the Arctic have created a wonderful account on the unsteadiness of Arctic change and its implications for Arctic governance.

The experienced scholar dealing with these issues may now think: 'We have heard all this before'. And yes, indeed we have, but it is clearly not Le Mière's and Mazo's intention to provide the reader with a completely new or revolutionary re-evaluation of Arctic developments, but to present a comprehensive, easily understandable account of history, trends, and prospects, or as the subtitle suggests 'insecurity and opportunity', in the high north. *Arctic opening* is thus the outcome of a two-year research project at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) and has been published under the 'Adelphi' series, key IISS publications of policy relevance. And it is beyond doubt that this book has achieved its policy-relevance.

In six chapters, plus an introduction and a conclusion, the authors therefore trace security- and policy-relevant issues in the Arctic: *The warming Arctic: contexts, Economic opportunities, The Arctic as a theatre of military operations, Paramilitary and constabulary activity, Geopolitical impacts of the changing Arctic* and *The future of Arctic governance*. These provide the reader not only with a great understanding of the biophysical and political environment of the Arctic, but also with the role that the different actors, which are in this case primarily nation states, play in Arctic affairs. This does not happen by predominantly focusing on one particular country, but the authors have chosen a comparative approach that allows the reader to draw his or her own conclusions. For example, chapter 4, *Paramilitary and constabulary activity* is a highly informative account on the importance of the national coast guards and other non-military, but militarised, organisations in times of melting sea ice. The authors therefore, more or less briefly, consider every Arctic state's capabilities and which specific role for example the coast guards play. Read in conjunction with several contributions in Zellen's *The fast-changing Arctic* (Zellen 2013) or even with Hønneland's case-study-based account on fisheries enforcement in the Barents Sea (Hønneland 2013), a very interesting picture on the importance of the coast guards in Arctic governance emerges which, as such, has been little investigated.

In essence, the authors disprove in *Arctic opening* any media frenzy with regard to a 'race for resources' or a 'new Cold War' in the Arctic. In chapter 3, albeit its easily misinterpretable title *The Arctic as a theatre of military operations*, they show that the militaries of the world have been active in the Arctic for centuries and that there is no difference between other regions of the world. Russia, for example, is often portrayed as an Arctic power that due to its 'Arctic claims' now increases its military presence in the north. While this as such may be the case, Le Mière and Mazo show that this can by no means be compared to

the militarisation of the Arctic during the cold war. Moreover, when comparing Russia's fleet increase in the Arctic to other fleets in the Black Sea or the Pacific Ocean, the ongoing restocking of the Northern Fleet is very small and must rather be considered a modernisation than expansion of Russia's Arctic maritime force. In a similar vein, the reduction of military expenditure in the Nordic states in the recent years in combination with the US' military focus elsewhere in the world and Canada's military procurement for primarily sovereignty purposes shows that a military conflict in the Arctic is very unlikely. Instead, although there is some sharp political rhetoric with regard to the Arctic in Canada or Russia, military cooperation has emerged in the form of manoeuvres and meetings. Although this cooperation still lacks a clear-cut framework and given some historical mistrust amongst Russia and NATO, the absence of permanent NATO-led forces in the Arctic and more circum-Arctic integration in military issues decreases the likelihood of military confrontation. Beautifully argued this chapter opens up a new causal chain that inevitably leads to the conclusion of non-confrontational Arctic governance

It is especially the two referred-to chapters that make this volume so valuable and which should be, perhaps as position papers, widely distributed to media outlets. As such, however, the book does not provide too much new information for those seeking to expand their already existing, scholarly knowledge on the Arctic. To the contrary, the book takes a rather conservative approach on actors in the north and centres its arguments on nation states. This is unfortunate although the authors recognise: 'One aspect of Arctic politics is often overlooked: the role of indigenous groups' (page 136). They nevertheless do not expand on the issue, but refer to indigenous peoples as political actors merely in a text box. Also the role of regions or sub-regional actors is neglected here, taking away a significant part of the complexity of Arctic governance.

This being said, I would highly recommend this book to those wishing to *learn* about the Arctic (policy-makers, students, journalists...), its possibilities and its current structures and trends. The reader will quickly comprehend that for example the opening of the sea routes or hydrocarbon deposits as such will not be economically feasible due to the Arctic's adverse environmental conditions. The feasibility of Arctic economic opportunities must therefore always be considered in the context of global economic developments and conclusions on cost-effectiveness must be drawn on the basis of global competitiveness (chapter 2). These insights, for example, are very enlightening and the easily understandable way in which *Arctic opening* has been written makes this a valuable, very basic contribution to a better understanding of Arctic politics and developments on which to build further research, and further knowledge. *Arctic opening* serves as a reminder to those driving sharp, confrontational rhetoric that indeed the Arctic is an area of peace and cooperation (Nikolas Sellheim, Faculty of Law, University of Lapland, PO Box 122, 96101 Rovaniemi, Finland (nikolas.sellheim@ulapland.fi)).

References

- Hønneland, G. 2013. *Making fisheries agreements work: post-agreement bargaining in the Barents Sea*. Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar.
- Zellen, B.S (editor). 2013. *The fast-changing Arctic: rethinking Arctic security for a warmer world*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press.